

WARFARIN (COUMADIN): WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Q: What is warfarin and why do I need it?

Warfarin is a medicine that helps your blood not clot as fast. Sometimes this drug is called a blood thinner. Warfarin is prescribed to prevent serious blood clots from forming in your body, which can cause a stroke or other life-threatening events.

Q: How long do I have to be on warfarin?

It depends on why you take warfarin and what other health problems you have.

Some people take warfarin for only a few months, but many people take it for the rest of their life.



Q: How should I take warfarin?

Always follow your doctor's or nurse's instructions and take the pills exactly as prescribed.

- Go to the pill line every day to get your warfarin pill. Rarely warfarin is given as a "carry med".
- Take your warfarin at about the same time every day, usually in the evening.
- Never take extra pills or skip a day. If you forget your pills one day, write it down and tell a doctor or nurse.
- Never stop taking warfarin unless your doctor tells you to stop. If you have any trouble with taking warfarin or getting refills, send an Urgent CDC 7362 request to the triage nurse.

Q: What tests will I need if I take warfarin?

A simple blood test called "INR" needs to be done regularly when taking warfarin. Your doctor will adjust your dose to get to a certain "INR". When you first start warfarin, you may need your blood checked often. Once your dose is adjusted, you only need blood tests about once a month.

Q: What do I need to know about using other medication when I am taking warfarin?

- When warfarin is taken with other medicines, it can change the way other medicines work, and other medicines can change the way warfarin works.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you are taking other medications, including over-the-counter medicines. Some common medications also raise the risk of bleeding, like aspirin or Motrin[®]-like medications (Naprosyn[®], Advil[®], Aleve[®]). Some "cough and cold medicines" and Pepto-Bismol may have aspirin.

Q: What are the side effects of warfarin?

Side effects with warfarin are uncommon but can include bleeding or bruising. A little bleeding that stops after a few minutes is okay, such as bleeding gums when brushing your teeth or a small nosebleed.

Tell your doctor or nurse right away if you have more serious bleeding, such as:

- Red, dark, coffee or cola-colored urine
- Stools that are black, bloody, or look like tar
- Bad nosebleeds, bleeding gums, or coughing up blood
- Throwing up coffee-colored or bright red vomit
- New bruises that come for no reason
- A cut that will not stop bleeding within 10 minutes
- Stomach, back or side pain that won't go away
- New or bad headache, problems with vision or speech, numbness or weakness, or confusion
- Too much menstrual bleeding

Q: What else should I know?

- Because of the risk of bleeding, don't do sports or other activities that could cause you to get hurt.
- Do not drink alcohol (Pruno), which can cause serious side effects with warfarin.
- **Do not change your diet too much while you are taking warfarin.** Green vegetables like spinach, lettuce, broccoli, cabbage and frozen peas have a lot of vitamin K and change the way warfarin works. Try to keep the amount of vitamin K foods you eat the same every day.
- Know your dose and the color of your pills. The color of warfarin/Coumadin[®]/Jantoven[®] pills tells you how strong the pill is. CDCR uses 1 mg, 2 mg, 2.5 mg, 3 mg, 4 mg, 5 mg, 6 mg, 7.5 mg, and 10 mg pills.

